



# Great Expectations

FOSTERING POWERFUL CHANGE



An Initiative of Virginia's Community Colleges & the  
Virginia Foundation for Community College Education



# About

- Focuses on the value of a college education as the best way to gain employment and achieve independence.
- Provides education that leads to employment opportunities that will improve the likelihood of success for foster youth.
- Offers individual support for youth as they finish high school, leave their foster homes and transition to living on their own.



# What We Do

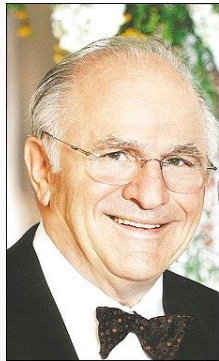
- a Great Expectations coach for each student
- Help with college admissions
- Applying for financial aid
- Career exploration and coaching
- Job preparation
- Life skills training
- Mentoring
- Connection to area resources

# History

- Began in 2008
- Donor initiated challenge
- 5 pilot colleges



Anne Holton



Mark Fried



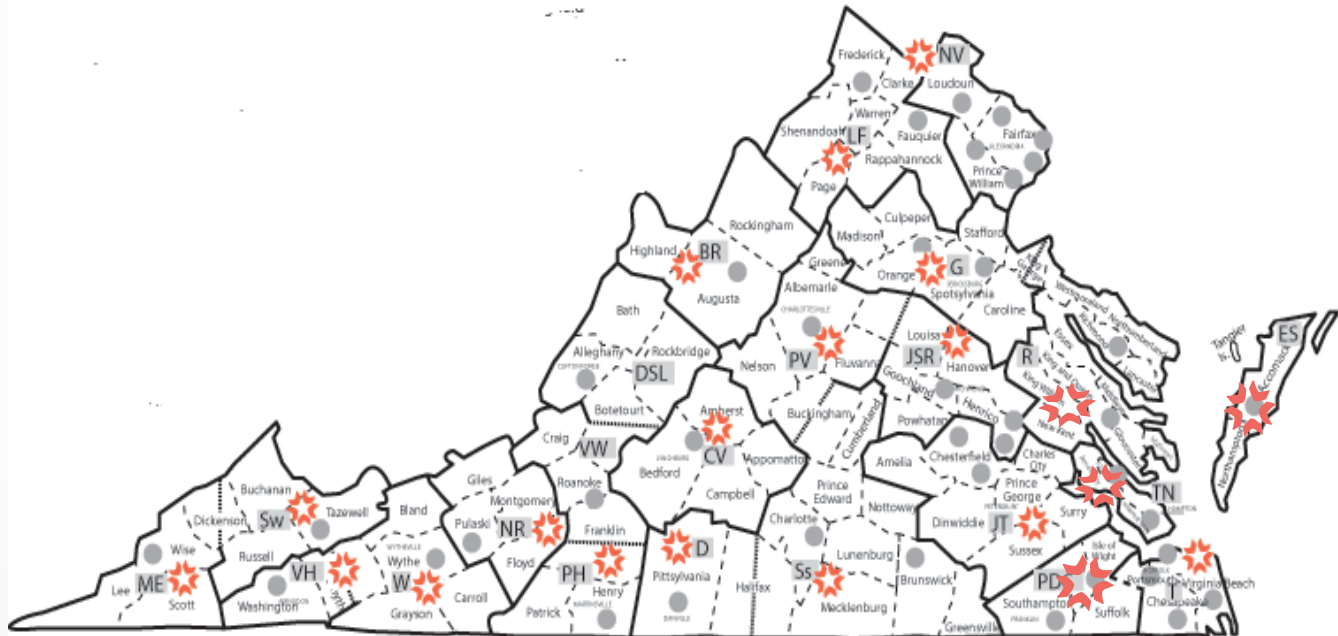
Barbara Fried



Chancellor Glenn Dubois



# History



- Began at 5 colleges
- Expanded over 12 years, now at 21 of 23



## Difficult Outcomes for Foster Youth



**59% incarcerated**



**31% homeless  
or housing  
insecure**



**60% rely on public assistance**



**Great Expectations**

FOSTERING POWERFUL CHANGE

# Earnings Gap



**\$13,989**

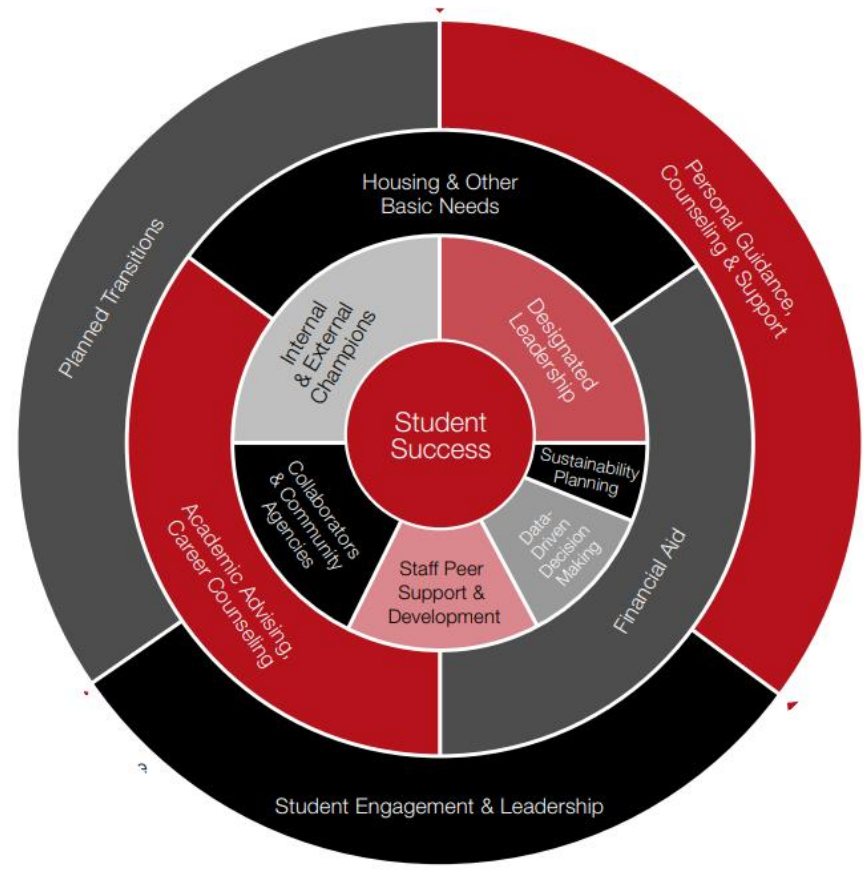
**Mean earnings  
foster youth**

**\$32,212**

**Mean earnings  
peers**



# Model from Casey Family Programs







# Performance Measures

- **Increasing % of students graduated or retained in following term**
- **Increasing % of students graduated or retained in following year**
- **Increasing % of students served in potential pool**
- **Increasing # of credentials earned each year**



# Student Success

## College Graduation Rate Comparison

**8%**



**Nationally**

**23%**

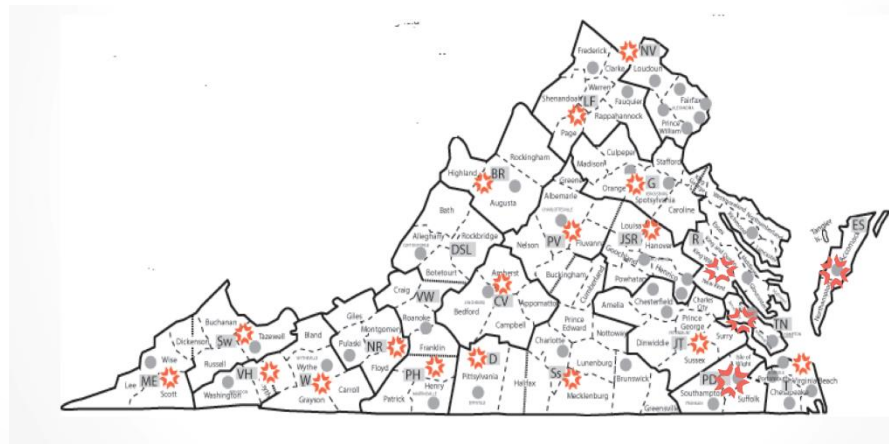


**Virginia's GE Students**



# Richard and Leslie Gilliam Housing Initiative

- Launched in 2019 to provide monthly housing stipend for GE students at :
  - Mountain Empire (MECC)
  - Southwest Virginia (SWCC)
  - Virginia Highlands (VHCC)
- Buchanan, Dickenson, Lee, Russell, Scott, Smyth, Tazewell, Washington, Wise and the city of Abingdon.
- 30 students 1<sup>st</sup> year
- 60 students 2<sup>nd</sup> year
- 45 students 3<sup>rd</sup> year
- \$250/\$400 a month stipend





## Richard and Leslie Gilliam Housing Initiative

- 79% retention rate semester-to-semester for housing supported GE students compared to 68% for all other Great Expectations' students
- 39% of housing supported GE students graduated from a credit degree program, earned an industry credential, or transferred to four-year institutions compared to 23% of GE students not receiving housing support
- Housing supported GE students, in credit courses, successfully completed on average 23.6 credits over academic year 2019-2020 compared to an average of 15 credits for other GE students.



**Great Expectations**

FOSTERING POWERFUL CHANGE

# Joe and Linda Daniel Success Fund FastForward Pilot

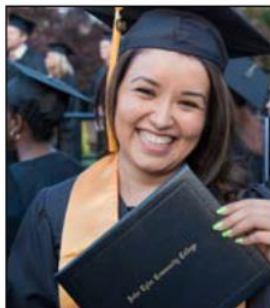
- Each of 21 GE college can nominate 2 GE students seeking a Fast Forward credential- cohort of 40 over 2 years
- GE student can receive a \$750 a month stipend while they pursue the credential (up to 14 months)
- Aim to enroll more GE students in shorter-term non-credit workforce credentials
- Stipend will allow them to focus their time on credential attainment
- Goal: 80% graduation rate
- Launching July 2021



# Great Expectations

FOSTERING POWERFUL CHANGE

## Virginia Tuition Grant for Former Foster Youth



### COLLEGE WITHIN REACH

Tuition grants for community college courses, both credit and non-credit are available for students who were in foster care, the custody of social services or who were special needs adoptees at time of graduation or GED.

### TUITION GRANTS

#### WHAT IS THE PROGRAM?

In 2000, legislation passed that created the Tuition Grant program to provide tuition and fees at any Virginia community college for high school graduates or GED completers in foster care or the custody of a social services agency, or considered a special needs adoption. This legislation was revised in 2009 and again in 2017. See below for provisions.

#### WHO IS ELIGIBLE?

Anyone certified to be in foster care, in the custody of a social service agency or a special needs adoption at the time they received their high school diploma or equivalency, or was formerly in foster care when turning 18 and subsequently received a high school diploma or equivalency is eligible as long as he or she:

- Enrolls in and maintains at least half-time enrollment (with a minimum of six credits) in an eligible program of at least one academic year in length or enrolls in a non-credit workforce program
- Is a resident of Virginia according to Section 23-7.4 of Code of Virginia
- Meets the satisfactory academic standards of the college for federal student financial aid
- Has not been previously enrolled full-time in a post-secondary institution more than five years and does not have a prior bachelor's degree
- Demonstrates financial need

#### HOW DO STUDENTS APPLY?

Potential students who fall in one of the three categories listed above must:

- Complete and submit to the U.S. Dept. of Education the FAFSA (credit programs) or complete financial aid forms required by the college's workforce development office (non-credit programs)
- Complete and submit an application for admission to the community college of your choice
- Submit documentation from the Department of Social Services regarding dates in foster care, or assistance received for a special needs adoption to the college's financial aid or workforce development office

#### HOW MUCH IS THE AWARD?

Awards will be provided to eligible applicants who are not already receiving sufficient grants to pay for their tuition and fees. Students who are already receiving grant funds that cover tuition and fees are not eligible for these awards.

#### DOES THE GRANT HAVE TO BE REPAID?

If a student's enrollment level drops below six credits or they drop out of their non-credit workforce program, eligibility for the grant is lost, and therefore, needs to be repaid.

#### FOR MORE INFORMATION

To find a Great Expectations coach: [www.greatexpectations.vccs.edu](http://www.greatexpectations.vccs.edu)  
For social services, visit: [www.dss.state.va.us](http://www.dss.state.va.us)  
For: Code of Virginia § 23.1-601





**Great Expectations**

FOSTERING POWERFUL CHANGE

# Questions?

**Rachel Mayes Strawn, Ph.D.**  
**Great Expectations Program Director**  
**757-592-4923**  
**[rstrawn@vccs.edu](mailto:rstrawn@vccs.edu)**